



FEMA

City of Urbana Wind Mitigation

Urbana, IL - Mitigation doesn't always take the form of actual construction projects or acquisitions. Federal and State funding mechanisms like the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) can sometimes be used in creative ways to meet local needs. Private citizens and the business community are the players that make the mitigation happen. But what may be needed to jumpstart local interest is a combination of educational tools that provide technical information and marketing efforts to spread the word.

In 1996 a tornado ripped through City of Urbana, located in central Illinois. More than 100 structures experienced wind damage and Champaign County received a Presidential disaster declaration. The occurrence of that tornado was not an isolated event, as the city lies within an area of the Midwest commonly called "tornado alley."

With the disaster declaration, came the availability of HMGP grant money for mitigation projects. According to Jan Horton, Hazard Mitigation Officer for the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), when her staff and the State's Interagency Mitigation Advisory Group discussed mitigation needs, they realized that the mechanical strategies for more wind-resistant construction had been developed, but no one had been implementing them. A task force was formed composed of knowledgeable members with a vested interest who worked as partners in the development of an educational piece: "The Windstorm Mitigation Manual for Light Frame Construction."

The collaborative effort used FEMA HMGP funding, administered by IEMA, with matching funds contributed by State Farm Fire and Casualty Company. David Wickershiemer, a faculty member in the School of Architecture, University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign (UIUC), compiled the manual with research assistance from the UIUC Building Research Council.

The City of Urbana received an additional HMGP grant to expand on the mitigation message of the manuals. They created two videos and marketed them to prospective homebuilders and building contractors. The Institute of Business and Home Safety (IBHS), an insurance industry organization, and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA) provided non-federal matching funds.

The grant also allowed the city to provide funds for brackets and garage door upgrades, using the concepts described in the manual, on six model homes under construction at the time. Craig Grant, manager of the Building Safety Division of Urbana at the time of the mitigation and coordinator of the video production, explained why the videos created more interest than the tax rebate: "The videos are effective in alerting people before they actually get into the building process about things they can do in home construction. We realized you had to reach the right people - the owners that would be paying the bill, as well as building contractors and building code officials."

The video entitled "Inland Wind-Resistant Construction, Upgrading the Wood Frame Home" introduces the concept of increasing a home's wind resistance with the implementation of simple framing techniques. It's intended for individuals attending home remodeling shows and representatives of local jurisdictions.



Champaign County,
Illinois



Quick Facts

Sector:

Public

Cost:

\$28,852.00 (Actual)

Primary Activity/Project:

Building Codes

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)